

CHANGES IN MOTIVATION AND ATTITUDES TOWARD LEARNING AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES FROM FIRST YEAR TO FINAL YEAR OF STUDYING AT UNIVERSITY AMONG IRANIAN STUDENTS OF ENGLISH, ARABIC, AND RUSSIAN

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Abstract

This paper investigates changes in attitude toward cultural differences (ethnorelativism) as well as motivation and attitudes toward learning English, Arabic and Russian from the first to the final year among the students of the respective languages at the University of Mazandaran. A group of 84 students majoring in English (42 students), Arabic (21 students) and Russian (21 students) were asked to fill out the questionnaire about the two variables (attitudes toward cultural differences as well as motivation and attitudes toward learning the foreign language they were studying). Analysis of data evinced a significant difference in attitude and motivation toward learning between first year and final year of studying at the university for Iranian students of Arabic, Russian and English. However, the Iranian learners of Arabic, unlike the Iranian learners of Russian and English, did not show any improvement from the first year to the final year on attitude toward cultural differences. It is concluded that there is no consistency among Iranian students of the three foreign languages in the two variables and that Iranian learners of English have shown most improvements in terms of motivation and attitudes toward learning English as well as attitude toward cultural differences.

Keywords: ethnorelativism; attitude; motivation; foreign language; cultural differences

INTRODUCTION

Successful learning of a second language depends on a myriad of factors. According to Gardner (2006) motivation and attitude are two affective factors considered to be key variables in successful language learning. Motivation has been defined differently in different schools. In Behaviorism, motivation is the acquisition of positive reinforcement to repeat the action for obtaining rewards. In Cognitivism motivation is the choices that people make. It is the forces behind our decisions. In Constructivism, in the definition of motivation the emphasis is on the social context and the belief is that each person is motivated differently (Brown 2007).

Gardner is a pioneer in research on motivation and attitude in second language (L2) learning. Gardner (1985) proposed a socio-educational model on L2 acquisition which consists of three components: motivation, integrativeness, and attitudes towards the learning situation. According to him motivation is “the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity” (Gardner 1985). According to Schmitt (2002) “motivation is often seen as the key learner variable because without it nothing happens”. Therefore, through identifying learning motivations in language learners researchers can determine the kinds of tasks that learners need to get involved in, the level of proficiency that learners are expected to attain, and the kind of intervention required for facilitating the learning process” (Abu Baker, Sulaiman & Razaai 2010). Motivation is dynamic as it evolves during the learning process. (Dornyei & Kormos 2000).

High motivation to learn a second language and a positive attitude towards learning a second language and its community are two key factors in successful second language learning (De Bot et. al. 2005). Learners’ attitude toward language learning is regarded as one of the most important factors impacting learning of a language (Fakeye 2010; Kara 2009). On the definition of attitude, Montano and Kasprzyk (2008) state, “Attitude is determined by the individual’s beliefs

about outcomes or attributes of performing the behavior (behavioral beliefs), weighted by evaluations of those outcomes or attributes.” Attitude is considered as a reaction based on the individual’s opinions or beliefs to some referents (Gardner 1985). The ability of learners to master another language is not only affected by the linguistic competence but also by their attitudes towards the target language. Attitude can influence the nature of learners’ behaviors and beliefs towards the language being learnt and its culture and community (Gardner & Lambert 1972).

Momani (2009) conducted a study on the correlation between the secondary level students’ attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language and their achievements in reading comprehension and found that there was a high correlation between the learners’ attitudes toward learning English and their performance in reading comprehension. Al-Zahrani (2008) conducted a study to determine the attitudes of Saudi students towards English over the course of three years and found that there was not any significant difference from the first to the final year in their attitudes towards learning English.

According to Fasold (1984) attitudes toward a language are often affected by attitudes toward the members of its speech community. Obeidat (2005) investigated attitude toward learning Arabic as a second language and the influence it has on first language (L1) and cultural identity among Malaysian students. He found that the students were more in favor of bilingualism than monolingualism and that they were more integratively motivated to learn Arabic because of the shared belief in the religion Islam. In his attempt to find out the motivation and attitudes toward English and the correlation of these two variables with English proficiency among Chinese university students, Liu (2007) found that the participants had positive attitudes toward learning English and were highly motivated to study it, and that their attitudes and motivation were positively correlated with their English proficiency.

In addition to the cognitive and affective perspectives, the nature of language learning has the social aspect as well (Padwick, 2010). Cultural awareness and attainment of intercultural skills are the by-products of language learning. Learning another language can connect learners to a society that is culturally different from their own social context (Sercu 2005). Greey (1994) defines culture as a system of values and beliefs learnt by members of a community. One benefit of attaining intercultural competence as a result of learning another language is that one learns about the strengths and weaknesses of their own culture by comparing it with the different aspects of the target language culture. Therefore, as Crozet and Liddicoat (1999) state students need to “distance themselves from their native language/cultural environment to see it for the first time as what it really is, as just one possible world view and not the only world view.” The intercultural approach to learning another language develops in learners an understanding of how the values are produced within a particular language community (Corbett 2003).

Schumann (1986) introduced his acculturation model in which he suggested three possible strategies which learners take when encountering a foreign culture: 1) assimilation, which is the total adoption of the target culture; 2) total rejection of the target culture or the preservation of the home culture; and 3) acculturation, which is functioning in the second language (L2) culture while maintaining L1 cultural identity. Tomlinson (2001) states that cultural awareness is an understanding of your own and other’s cultures. Therefore, as Levine and Adelman (1982) state as a result of misinterpretations, ethnocentrism, stereotypes, and prejudice cultural conflicts would occur. Paige (1993) believes the experience of cultural differences is challenging, especially when the cultural differences are perceived negatively. It is important to recognize cultural influences for developing cultural sensitivity. In their study on the attitudes of the education officials and parents of high school students toward the teaching of English in its

Western culture, Kasaian and Subba Krishna (2011) found parents and Iranian education officials showed resistance to aspects of incompatible western culture in classroom materials.

As Liddicoat (2002) states the acquisition processes of a second language and culture are similar processes in which the learner begins with knowledge of his L1 language and culture and gradually approximates the L2 language and culture. Liddicoat (2002) used the term intercultures for these cultural approximative systems, following Selinker (1972) who had coined the term interlanguage for the linguistic approximative systems. Intercultures contain cultural rules derived either from L1 or L2 and/or rules that belong to neither L1 nor L2.

In today's world of communication, foreign language learning is valued a lot in all educational systems worldwide. It is commonplace to state that motivation and attitude to a foreign language impacts the learning process and should be considered in language courses. In the Iranian higher education system there are many degree programs for different foreign languages. In this context, the cultural impacts of learning foreign languages, as transferred through imported learning materials are still regarded as a concern by Iranian policy makers and curriculum developers who greatly value the local cultural values. However, the intriguing question is if Iranian undergraduate students of each of the three foreign languages, namely English, Russian and Arabic show the same degree of motivation and attitude toward learning the respective language and attitude toward cultural differences from the first year to the final year of studying at university. In other words, this study attempts to find out if the language variable can influence students' motivation and attitude toward language learning and attitude toward cultural differences from the first year to the final year of studying at university. Therefore, the following questions are put forward:

1: Do attitude toward cultural differences as well as motivation and attitude toward learning English, Arabic, and Russian differ from first year to final year of studying at the University of Mazandaran among students of respective languages?

2: Do attitude toward cultural differences as well as motivation and attitude toward learning English, Arabic, and Russian differ among students of respective languages in the first year of studying at the University of Mazandaran?

3: Do attitude toward cultural differences as well as motivation and attitude toward learning English, Arabic, and Russian differ among students of respective languages in the final year of studying at the University of Mazandaran?

A null hypothesis is suggested for each of the research questions above.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The participants of this study were 42 students majoring in English, 21 students majoring in Russian, and 21 students majoring in Arabic, during the academic year of 2013. They were sixth and eighth semester BA students of the University of Mazandaran. Before coming to this level, they had already passed at least 6 semesters of English, Russian, and Arabic courses and were considered to have a good familiarity of the culture of the speech community due to these courses. They all had previous experiences of learning English and Arabic at guidance school, and high school. In addition, Arabic is the religious language for all these students, and therefore, it is valued in this regard by educationalists in the Iranian educational system. However, there is no course offered for the Russian language at guidance school or high school level, and only Iranian students of Russian have knowledge of Russian language at university level. These students were selected through convenience sampling which is the most common sampling strategy, at the postgraduate research level (Dornyei 2011). In this kind of sampling the researcher uses those who are available.

The subjects already passed many courses in their own field, and since they were exposed to texts (e.g., short stories, novels, poetry) loaded with the culture of the speech community of

the target language (i.e., English, Arabic, and Russian), they were regarded suitable for the purpose of this study.

INSTRUMENTATION

The following instruments were employed:

A: Questionnaire of attitudes toward cultural differences

For the purpose of determining the attitude of Iranian EFL learners towards cultural differences from the first to the final years of studying at university level, the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity developed by Bennett (1986) was adopted and adapted. It was assigned a five-point Likert scale (Never true about me/ Seldom true about me/ Sometimes true about me/ Usually true about me / and Always true about me). The questionnaire was translated into Persian to ensure students are comfortable with the concepts explained in their mother tongue, and for more clarity some words were paraphrased in the translation. The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), developed by Bennett (1986), is an explanation of how people construe cultural difference. "Bennett's model of intercultural sensitivity is an explanation, based on more than twenty years of empirical observation, of how people develop intercultural competence." (Hammer & Bennett 1998) The assumption underlying this model is that the more sophisticated and complex one's experience of cultural difference becomes, the more increase there will be in one's potential competence in intercultural relations. Bennett identified two stages, namely, ethnocentric stage which is the extent to which one's own culture dominates other cultures, and the ethnorelative stage, which is the extent to which one recognizes and respects perspectives from other cultures. Each stage has three orientations through which people move in their acquisition of intercultural competence. For the purpose of this study, just the second phase, which is ethnorelativism, was employed. Changes in the ethnorelative stage were studied among students of the three foreign languages (i.e., English, Russian, Arabic) from the first year to the final (third and fourth) years of studying at the University of Mazandaran.

The ethnocentric stage has three levels of denial, defense, and minimization. The ethnorelative stages of intercultural development are explained below:

1- Acceptance: At this stage, one's own culture is just one of a number of equally complex worldviews and people with this worldview are able to experience others as different from themselves, but equally human. People at this stage can construct culture-general categories allowing them to generate a range of relevant cultural contrasts among many cultures.

2- Adaptation: Adaptation to cultural differences is a stage in which the experience of another culture creates perception and behavior which are appropriate to that culture. One's worldview is expanded to include relevant constructs from other cultural worldviews. In other words, adaptation involves the extension of your beliefs and behavior, not a substitution of one set of beliefs and behavior for another. So, one does not lose his/her primary cultural identity to operate effectively in a different cultural context.

3- Integration: integration is the final stage of intercultural development. At this stage, learners extend their perception of events in a cultural context to the perceptions of their own identity. However, as Bennett et al. (2003) argued in most situations of intercultural communication, integration is not necessarily more useful than adaptation, and to be successful at intercultural communication empathy for people from other cultures is required, and not necessarily a radical reconstruction of identity (see appendix).

B: Questionnaire of motivation and attitudes toward foreign language learning

To collect data on motivation and attitude toward learning English, Arabic, and Russian to be administered to Iranian students of the respective languages, Gardner's (1985) 104-item Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) was adopted and adapted. The instrument used a five point Likert scale, ranging from 'Never true about me' to 'Always true about me'. This instrument was adopted as it offers "an impetus to the study of language attitudes and motivation that had previously been lacking" (Benson 1991). The questionnaire was translated into Persian so that

all students from different foreign language courses (Persian, English, Russian) would understand it clearly. Students were told there was no time limit for filling out the questionnaire. Possible questions about the items and the true interpretation of them were answered by the researchers. Respondents were ensured that their responses would be kept confidential and used only for research purposes. AMTB items cover eight domains, including, a) interest in English, b) parental encouragement, c) motivational intensity, d) attitudes towards learning English, e) attitudes towards English-speaking people, f) integrative orientation, g) desire to learn English, and h) instrumental orientation. Out of these domains, domain two (i.e., parental encouragement) was left out as the researchers were not after this kind of motivation in their research; therefore, out of 104 items 96 items were selected for the purpose of this study.

THE PILOT STUDY

The pilot study was conducted among 34 Iranian learners of Arabic (11 students), English (13 students) and Russian (10 students). They were reminded there was no right or wrong answer in the two questionnaires (Attitude to cultural differences as well as motivation and attitude toward language learning). The questionnaires were written in Persian to prevent any possible misinterpretation of the items and no time limit was set for them. The participants who took part in the pilot study were excluded from the main study. To make sure of the internal consistency reliability coefficient of the two instruments, the Cronbach Coefficient Alpha was computed and the reliability turned out to be 0.79 and 0.91, respectively. Then, two experts in the field were also asked to assess the instrument in terms of how effectively it sampled significant aspects of its purpose for providing an estimate of content validity. Finally, ambiguous or unclear words were reworded. There was no time limit set for answering the questionnaire items. However, the mean time was 13 minutes for the questionnaire of attitudes toward cultural differences and 28 minutes for the questionnaire of motivation and attitudes toward foreign language learning.

PROCEDURE

The researcher of this study approached the participants in their classes and asked them to complete the two research instruments. The participants were asked to read the items carefully, and to ask questions for clarification if there were problems in the comprehension of the items. The researcher briefly explained the purpose of the study to the students. As participation was voluntary, the students were interested in cooperating with the researchers. They were asked to answer the two instruments and mention about their motivation and attitude toward learning as well as attitude toward cultural differences in their first and final years of studying at university. Therefore, the researcher relied on retrospective longitudinal study methodology for the data about the first year of their education at university. As Dornyei (2011) stated, "retrospective longitudinal data are gathered during a single investigation in which respondents are asked to think back and answer questions about the past." According to Ortega and Ibarra-Shea (2005) as language learning happens over time, language learning issues can better be investigated and interpreted using a full longitudinal design. They state, "Ultimately, it is through cumulative longitudinal findings that the SLA research community would be able to contribute meaningful characterizations of the gradual process of attaining advanced second language and literacy competencies across various contexts." (p.28)

DATA ANALYSIS

In this section each research question is restated using descriptive and inferential statistics.

1: Do attitude toward cultural differences as well as motivation and attitude toward learning English, Arabic, and Russian differ from first year to final year of studying at the University of Mazandaran among students of respective languages?

Analysis of data using paired t-test between different means was conducted as represented in the following tables. If the observed Sig. (2-tailed) for the two variables is less than 0.01, there is

a significant difference between first year and final year of studying at the university. If the mean difference is negative, the mean score in the final year is more than the first year (see Table 1 through 4).

TABLE 1: Analysis of mean differences using paired t-test

| Field of study | Variable | Year of study | Mean score \pm SEM |
|----------------|---|---------------|----------------------|
| Russian | Motivation and Attitude toward learning | First year | 349.28 \pm 10.97 |
| | | Final year | 382.67 \pm 12.14, |
| | Ethnorelativism | First year | 32.90 \pm 1.56 |
| | | Final year | 36.14 \pm 1.52 |
| English | Motivation and Attitude toward learning | First year | 352.31 \pm 4.01 |
| | | Final year | 394.58 \pm 3.44 |
| | Ethnorelativism | First year | 33.73 \pm 1.03 |
| | | Final year | 38.90 \pm 0.89 |
| Arabic | Motivation and Attitude toward learning | First year | 330.38 \pm 11.18 |
| | | Final year | 355.81 \pm 12.14 |
| | Ethnorelativism | First year | 31.00 \pm 0.54 |
| | | Final year | 32.86 \pm 1.16 |

Analysis of data evinces that as the obtained Sig. (2-tailed) for motivation and attitude to learn Russian is less than 0.01, there is a significant difference between first year and final year of studying at the university. In addition, there is a significant difference between the mean scores in ethnorelativism, as the observed Sig. (2-tailed) for motivation and attitude to learn Russian is less than 0.01. The negative mean shows the degree of mean difference from the first year to the final year. In fact, if we subtract mean scores of the first year and fourth year, the mean score in the fourth year is more than that of the first year when the result is negative (see Table 2).

TABLE 2: Paired t-test related to variables for Iranian students of Russian for first and final years

| Paired Differences | | | | | | |
|--|-----------|----------|---------|--------|----|-----------------|
| Variable | Mean | S.D | S.E | T | Df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
| Motivation and Attitudes toward Learning English | -33.38095 | 31.26896 | 6.82345 | -4.892 | 20 | .000 |
| Ethnorelativism | -3.23810 | 5.12742 | 1.11890 | -2.894 | 20 | .009 |

Analysis of data evinces that as the observed Sig. (2-tailed) for motivation and attitude to learn Arabic is less than 0.01, there is a significant difference between first and final years of studying at the university. However, there is no significance difference between the mean scores in ethnorelativism, as the observed Sig. (2-tailed) for ethnorelativism among students of Arabic is more than 0.01. The negative mean shows the degree of mean difference from the first year to the final year. In fact, if we subtract mean scores of the first year and fourth year, the mean score in the fourth year is more than that of the first year when the result is negative. However, this small difference from the first year to the final year in ethnorelativism is not significant for the students of Arabic (see Table 3).

TABLE 3: Paired t-test related to variables for Iranian students of Arabic for first and final years

| Paired Differences | | | | | | |
|--|-----------|----------|---------|--------|----|-----------------|
| Variable | Mean | S.D | S.E | T | Df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
| Motivation and Attitudes toward learning English | -25.42857 | 21.47224 | 4.68563 | -5.427 | 20 | .000 |
| Ethnorelativism | -1.85714 | 5.15059 | 1.12395 | -1.652 | 20 | .114 |

Analysis of data evinces that as the observed Sig. (2-tailed) for all variables is less than 0.01, there is a significant difference between first year and final year of studying at the university. Since the mean difference is negative, the mean score in the fourth year is more than that of the first year (see Table 4).

TABLE 4: Paired t-test related to variables for Iranian students of English for first and final years

| Paired Differences | | | | | | |
|--|-----------|----------|---------|--------|----|-----------------|
| Variable | Mean | S.D | S.E | T | Df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
| Motivation and Attitudes toward Learning English | -42.27156 | 29.52656 | 4.55605 | -9.278 | 41 | .000 |
| Ethnorelativism | -5.17714 | 4.78612 | .73851 | -7.010 | 41 | .000 |

2: Do attitude toward cultural differences as well as motivation and attitude toward learning English, Arabic, and Russian differ among students of respective languages in the first year of studying at the University of Mazandaran?

As shown in the following table, there is no significant difference between the three foreign languages, as the P_v obtained is more than 0.05. In other words, the students are at the same level in all the variables in the first year (see Table 5).

TABLE 5: comparison of variables among Iranian learners of Russian, Arabic, and English in the first year

| Variable | Major | N | Mean | S.D | F | P_v |
|--|---------|----|----------|----------|-------|--------------|
| Motivation and Attitudes toward Learning English | Russian | 21 | 349.2857 | 50.29328 | 2.176 | 0.12 |
| | Arabic | 21 | 330.3810 | 51.21960 | | |
| | English | 42 | 352.3129 | 25.96456 | | |
| Ethnorelativism | Russian | 21 | 32.9048 | 7.13376 | 1.421 | 0.247 |
| | Arabic | 21 | 31.0000 | 2.46982 | | |
| | English | 42 | 33.7257 | 6.67758 | | |

3: Do attitude toward cultural differences as well as motivation and attitude toward learning English, Arabic, and Russian differ among students of respective languages in the final year of studying at the University of Mazandaran?

Analysis of data shows there is a significant difference between students of the three languages in the two variables as the P_v observed is less than 0.01; in other words, the mean scores between the students of the three languages is not the same in the final year.

Tukey's Post Hoc test shows there is a significant difference between the mean scores of students of Arabic (355.8095) and English (394.5845) for the motivation and attitudes toward

Learning English. For ethnorelativism there is a significant difference between students of Arabic (32.8571) and English (38.9029), but there is no significant difference between other variables. In addition, there is no significant difference between mean scores of students of Arabic and Russian for different variables. This means that during four years of study the students of these languages did not show any difference from the first year to the final year in different variable. (see table 6).

TABLE 6: comparison of variables among Iranian learners of Russian, Arabic, and English in the fourth year

| Variable | Major | N | Mean | S.D | F | P _v |
|--|---------|----|----------|----------|-------|----------------|
| Motivation and Attitudes toward Learning English | Russian | 21 | 382.6667 | 62.04864 | 5.358 | 0.007 |
| | Arabic | 21 | 355.8095 | 55.61980 | | |
| | English | 42 | 394.5845 | 22.28766 | | |
| Ethnorelativism | Russian | 21 | 36.1429 | 6.98774 | | 0.002 |
| | Arabic | 21 | 32.8571 | 5.32246 | | |
| | English | 42 | 38.9029 | 5.73747 | | |

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This paper investigated changes in the motivational and attitudinal learning orientations and the cultural attitudes of Iranian students of English, Arabic and Russian from the first to the final year of studying at the University of Mazandaran. It was found that students of Russian and English improved significantly in both variables from the first to the final years. However, students of Arabic improved significantly in motivation and attitudes toward learning Arabic from the first to the final years, but they showed no significant improvement from first year to final years in ethnorelativism. Comparison between the students of the three foreign languages showed there was no significant difference in attitude toward cultural differences as well as motivation and attitude toward learning of respective languages in the first year of studying at the University of Mazandaran. However, these differences were significant in the final year. Students of Arabic and English showed a significant difference in motivation and attitudes

toward learning English as well as in ethnorelativism. However, there was no significant difference between mean scores of students of Arabic and Russian for these two variables in the final years. Findings of this study showed that there was no consistency among students of three foreign languages in the two variables in their final years of studying at the University of Mazandaran, though they did not differ significantly in their first year of their studies at university level. Iranian learners of English showed most changes in mean scores in the two variables in the final year.

Success in learning a second or a foreign language depends on a myriad of factors. Motivation and attitudes are two affective factors regarded as key variables in successful language learning (Gardner 2006). Motivation is believed not to be static; it evolves dynamically during the learning process, varying from day to day and task to task (Dornyei & Kormos 2000). According to Fasold (1984) attitudes toward a language are often affected by attitudes toward the members of its speech community. Obeidat (2005) investigated attitude toward learning Arabic as a second language and the influence it has on L1 and cultural identity among Malaysian students. He found that the students were more in favor of bilingualism than monolingualism and that they were more integratively motivated to learn Arabic because of the shared belief in the religion Islam. Al-Zahrani (2008) conducted a study to determine the attitudes of Saudi students towards English over the course of three years and found that there was not any significant difference from the first to the final year in their attitudes towards learning English. Al- Zahrani's finding is different from the findings of the present research regarding students of English in Iranian context. However, the current research is different from Al- Zahrani's study in that in this study three foreign languages (English, Arabic, and Russian) were simultaneously taken into account. The different findings among students of three different foreign languages show that language variable is very important in shaping students attitudes toward cultural differences and attitude and motivation toward foreign language learning.

Cultural awareness and attainment of intercultural skills are the by-products of language learning. Learning another language can connect learners to a society that is culturally different from their own social context (Sercu 2005). Paige (1993) believes the experience of cultural differences is challenging, especially when the cultural differences are perceived negatively. It is important to recognize cultural influences for developing cultural sensitivity. In their study on the attitudes of the education officials and parents of high school students toward the teaching of English in its Western culture, Kasaian and Subba Krishna (2011) found parents and Iranian education officials showed resistance to aspects of incompatible western culture in classroom materials. However, in this study, students of Russian and English became more ethnorelative in their final years compared to their first year. However, students of Arabic did not change significantly from the first year to the final year in ethnorelativism.

As De Bot et al. (2005) assert high motivation and positive attitude toward learning should be acknowledged so that second language learning can be facilitated. As Kara (2009) stated:

Positive attitudes lead to the exhibition of positive behaviors toward courses of study, with participants absorbing themselves in courses and striving to learn more. Such students are also observed to be more eager to solve problems, to acquire the information and skills useful for daily life and to engage themselves emotionally.

This study showed Iranian students of English and Russian improved in ethnorelativism from the first to the final years of studying at university, though this change was not observed among Iranian learners of Arabic. But how important this change or stability in ethnorelativism would be among learners of foreign languages in Iranian higher education system? Does this change alienate Iranian learners of foreign languages from their own cultural values? Or does this stability necessarily mean loyalty to one's own cultural values? In other words, does degree of change in ethnorelativism imply degree of royalty to one's native culture? According to Crozet

and Liddicoat (1999) students need to “distance themselves from their native language/culture environment to see it for the first time as what it really is, as just one possible world view and not the only world view”. According to Schumann’s (1986) acculturation theory foreign language learners learn to function in the new culture and still maintain their own identity. According to Bada (2000) awareness of cultural values does not imply conforming to such values. Therefore, according to these views familiarity with a foreign culture and improvements in ethnorelativism does not necessarily result in rejection of one’s own identity.

Based on the findings of this research, it is recommended that material developers and foreign language teachers consider the effect of year of study and field of study among learners of different foreign languages on increasing motivation and attitude toward learning a foreign language as well as attitude toward cultural differences. Education authorities should be careful about the change or lack of change in attitudes toward cultural differences among Iranian students of different foreign languages and weigh the advantages of it against its disadvantages. Students can be given awareness of cultural differences and the move toward ethnorelativism in their endeavor to learn a foreign language. Textbooks should also give students insights into other cultures as language learning can hardly be imagined without attaining awareness of the social and cultural values of the speakers of the language being learnt.

However, it is recommended for further research to investigate how much of emphasis should be given to issues related to cultural differences and what aspects of cultural differences can be included in the foreign language textbooks so that attitude and motivation to foreign language learning are improved and finally learning is achieved in a more natural way.

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APPENDIX

Attitudes toward Cultural Difference

A Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity

Stage 4 - Acceptance (neutral about difference)

- I accept difference as deep and legitimate.
- I know other people are genuinely different from me and accept the inevitability of other value systems and behavioral norms.
- I still may find some of these behaviors hard to deal with or accept, but am not threatened by them, and don't judge them as wrong or bad.
- I don't normally adopt many of these behaviors myself, or adjust my own behaviors to be more culturally sensitive, but am tolerant and have a sympathetic attitude
- I am neutral about cultural difference

Stage 5 - Adaptation (difference is a positive thing)

- My behavior and attitudes change.
- I am willing and able to change my own behavior to conform to different norms.
- I am able to empathize with people from different cultures.
- I do not give up my own or birth culture's values and beliefs but I do integrate aspects of other cultures into it.

Stage 6 - Integration (I can become different and still be me): Ethnorelativism

- I become bicultural, effortlessly adjusting behavior to suit the culture of the people I am with—"style switching"